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Officer Career Development: The Post-resignation Survey

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) The naval aviation community is faced with the problem of retaining its officers in sufficient numbers to meet its requirements for officers with more than 10 years of experience. This research followed aviators who had resigned from the Navy between 1982 and 1986. In general, the officers were satisfied with their decision and thought very highly of many facets of their naval experience. However, their impressions of the amount of paperwork, crisis management, detailers, work hours, and sea duty were unfavorable with the impressions of the first two factors becoming even worse in comparison with their civilian experience. It is recommended that detailing and assignments be separated on the Officer Separation Questionnaire and realistic preparation for nonflying duties be initiated early in flight training.					
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FOREWORD

This effort was conducted within program element 0602233N (Mission Support Technology), project RM33M20 (Manpower and Personnel Technology), task RM33M20.06 (Career and Occupational Design). The purpose of the work unit is to develop prototype models of unrestricted line (URL) officer career decisions that can be used to assess the impact of present and proposed URL career policy and practices upon those decisions and the officers' career activities.

This report was completed under the sponsorship of the Office of Chief of Naval Research (ONT-222). This report investigated the retention of naval aviators by analyzing the evaluations of naval aviators who resigned in FY82-86. These results were briefed to OP-130E2, OP-59, and NMPC-432 in April 1988 and are published now in this form for archival purposes.

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SUMMARY

Problem

The aviation warfare community is continually faced with the problem of retaining aviation warfare officers (AWOs). There are two generic techniques, econometric modeling and survey research, used to establish which factors influence the retention of naval officers. Most survey research that seeks to determine factors influencing retention is conducted either by surveying officers while they are in the Navy and correlating their responses to some criterion (e.g., intention to turnover), or surveying officers upon their release from active duty (i.e., the Officer Separation Questionnaire administered by OP-136). Additional information to address this problem can also be uncovered by surveying individuals after they have left the Navy.

Objective

The objective of this study is to provide an understanding of the career-related attitudes of AWOs who voluntarily resigned from the Navy. In addition, this study provides some indication of attitude change toward the Navy related to resignation.

Between November 1986 and January 1987, survey data were collected from 667 AWOs who had resigned between 1982 and 1986. These data were part of the second wave of a longitudinal study on officer careers. Previously, during the spring of 1982, survey data, which focused on career experiences and assignments, were collected from 5,051 AWOs. Data from these two collections were combined and provided the means to assess attitude change over time. For purposes of this study, a sample of pilots and naval flight officers who voluntarily resigned as lieutenants and who completed both the 1982 AWO Career Questionnaire and the 1987 Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire were selected ($N = 196$). Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire data were analyzed to provide an understanding of the turnover process from the perspective of individuals who had resigned. Following this, officers' responses from both the 1982 AWO Career Questionnaire and the 1987 Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire were compared to determine whether significant changes had occurred since resignation.

Results

1. In general, AWOs who resigned from active duty were quite satisfied with their decision and, if they had to do it over again would probably leave the Navy prior to retirement.
2. Resigned AWOs, however, perceived many facets of their naval careers as positive experiences. Specifically, they thought very highly of: (a) the other officers they worked with, (b) shore duty, (c) their previous assignments, and (d) liberty ports.
3. Nonetheless, AWOs who had resigned evaluated five facets of a naval career unfavorably relative to their civilian career experience: (a) amount of paperwork, (b) crisis management, (c) detailers, (d) work hours, and (e) sea duty.
4. When comparing the evaluations of career characteristics between 1982 and 1987, there was a sizeable difference for only one item (i.e., desirable place to live). That is, when in the Navy, respondents evaluated a civilian career much more favorably when it came to having a desirable

place to live. On the other hand, now that they have joined the civilian work force, civilian and naval careers are assessed much more comparably when it comes to having desirable places to live.

Recommendations

1. Because individuals in our sample evaluated their previous assignments differently than they evaluated their previous detailers, OP-136 should consider modifying the current Officer Separation Questionnaire to reflect this. That is, ask officers to evaluate separately their past assignments and their previous experiences with detailers.

2. Realistic expectations regarding nonflying duties and responsibilities should be instilled in aviators while they are still in flight training. Further, the importance of these duties and responsibilities should continually be emphasized during aviators' initial sea and shore tours.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

The aviation warfare community is continually faced with the problem of retaining aviation warfare officers (AWOs). There are two generic techniques, econometric modeling and survey research, used to establish which factors influence the retention of naval officers. Most survey research that seeks to determine factors influencing retention is conducted either by: (1) surveying officers while they are in the Navy and correlating their responses to some criterion (e.g., intention to turnover), or (2) surveying officers upon their release from active duty (i.e., the Officer Separation Questionnaire administered by OP-136). Additional information to address this problem can also be uncovered by surveying individuals after they have left the Navy.

Objective

The objective of this study is to provide an understanding of the career-related attitudes of AWOs who voluntarily resigned from the Navy. In addition, this study provides some indication of attitude change toward the Navy related to resignation. We do not suggest that post-resignation surveys are either more valid or less valid than pre-resignation surveys. Rather, post-resignation surveys provide an additional perspective from which to view the resignation decision.

Background

The Navy is repeatedly in the throes of a pilot retention problem. In certain subcommunities, retention of naval flight officers (NFOs) is a problem as well. While commanding officers routinely interview junior officers prior to resigning, the only systematic method of collecting data on attrition reasons has been administration of the Officer Separation Questionnaire (OPNAV 1910; see Naval Aviator Active Duty Service Obligation Study, 1988). The Officer Separation Questionnaire is given to all officers separating from active duty. Table 1 presents the relative ranking of the top 10 reasons for attrition provided by pilots and NFOs during fiscal year 1987.

The sole reliance on such exit surveys and interviews, however, has not been without criticism (Hinrichs, 1975; Lefkowitz & Katz, 1969; Management Decision Systems, 1989). For example, Hinrichs (1975) found no significant relationship between data gathered upon exit from a corporation (using interviews) and data gathered several months after the time of termination (using both surveys and interviews). It is likely that the method of gathering termination data affects the honesty of the responses made by those resigning. That is, exit interviews may suppress negative reasons for resignation. On the other hand, it is equally likely that resigning individuals may not fully know the reasons why they are resigning. Only upon reflection some time after resignation do individuals understand all the factors leading up to their resignation. Furthermore, according to Lefkowitz and Katz (1969), it is "illogical to assume that one set of proffered reasons (say, several months after termination of a job) has any more value as a criterion assessment than some other set (say, immediately prior to termination)" (p. 446). It is not surprising, therefore, that both Hinrichs (1975) and Lefkowitz and Katz (1969) recommend gathering data on reasons for resignations both prior to resignation and after individuals have been separated for some period of time. While neither approach alone is entirely valid, both provide valuable information (Management Decision Systems, 1989).

Table 1

**Officer Separation Questionnaire Results: Aviation Warfare Officers'
Rankings of Factors Contributing to Their Resignation**

Item	Pilots	NFOs
Family separation	1	1
Crisis management	2	2
Problems with assignment/detailing	3	9
Unable to plan/control career	4	4
Erosion of benefits	5	3
Geographic instability	6	--
Demands on personal life	7	--
Dependent medical care	8	8
Unsatisfactory officer evaluation system	9	7
Poor management/leadership	10	6
Promotion policies/opportunities	--	5
Suppressed initiative/creativity	--	10

Note. NFOs = naval flight officers.

Apart from the Officer Separation Questionnaire, there is currently only one other large-scale attempt to determine factors influencing naval officer retention decisions and behaviors (Bruce, 1989; Bruce & Burch, 1989; Burch, Sheposh, & Morrison, 1991). The Navy Personnel Research and Development Center has been collecting longitudinal data on naval officers since 1982. (See Morrison and Cook, 1985 for a further description of this effort.)

METHOD

Between 1982 and 1986, 1,783¹ AWOs, who had been commissioned between 1972 and 1979, voluntarily resigned from the Navy. Of those aviators, 522 had completed an Aviation Officer Questionnaire in 1982 (Morrison & Cook, 1985). The 1986/1987 Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire was mailed to the 424 officers for whom addresses were available. The 196 respondents, a 46 percent response rate, represented the length-of-service cohorts (commissioning years 1972-1979) in which significant voluntary resignation has occurred in the past. Assuming that the 196 respondents represented a random sample of the 1,783 in the population, we are 95 percent confident that the interval $\bar{y} \pm .05 \bar{y}$ will contain the item mean for the population (Cochran, 1977; Kalton, 1983). Table 2 provides a further description of the sample of pilots and NFOs whose data were analyzed.

Variables

The two surveys used for this particular study (the 1982 AWO Career Questionnaire and the 1987 Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire) are described in Bruce, Burch, and Russell (in process) and Burch, Bruce, and Russell (in process). The variables used in the analyses are described below and are reproduced in the appendix.

¹Estimates provided from the Officer Master File and project data.

Table 2
Sample Description

Subgroup	N	%
Aviation Subcommunity		
TacAir-1 (VAL, VAM, VF)	72	37
TacAir-2 (VAW, VAQ, VS)	32	16
Patrol (VP)	55	28
Helo (HC, HM, HS, HSL)	18	9
Other (e.g., VC, VQ)	19	10
Aviator Type		
Pilot	137	70
NFO	59	30
Commissioning Source		
Regular commission	105	54
Reserve commission	86	44
Other (e.g., prior enlisted)	5	2
Marital Status		
Single	44	22
Married	143	73
Divorced	9	5

Notes. N = number of respondents, VAL = light attack, VAM = medium attack, VF = fighter, VAW = electronic warfare, VAQ = electronic counter measures, VS = carrier anti-submarine warfare, VP = anti-submarine warfare patrol, HC = logistics, HM = mine countermeasures, HS = anti-submarine warfare, HSL = light anti-submarine warfare, VC = composite, VQ = electronic intelligence, NFO = naval flight officer.

Post-resignation Impressions Regarding the Navy

In the Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire (see Appendix), the respondents used a five-point scale to evaluate 14 aspects of their prior naval career. The response scale ranged from 1 = *very negative* to 5 = *very positive*. These items measured both perceptions of the job (e.g., sea duty, amount of paperwork, work hours, etc.) and perceptions of the organization (e.g., detailers, medical benefits/care, leadership provided, etc.).

In addition, a number of items assessed general attitudes regarding resignation from the Navy. Satisfaction with the decision to resign was measured with a single item that ranged from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. A related item asked whether individuals, if they had to do it over again (i.e., resign), would leave the Navy prior to retirement. This response scale ranged from 1 = *definitely would not* to 5 = *definitely would*.

Two items evaluated the amount and quality of flying time. These response scales ranged from 1 = *very negative* to 5 = *very positive*. Another item assessed whether individuals considered themselves primarily aviators or naval officers, while they were in the Navy. This response scale ranged from 1 = *I considered myself an aviator, first and foremost* to 5 = *I considered myself a Navy officer, first and foremost*. Using a scale covering the period before the receipt of wings (1) to after the second shore tour (6), an item assessed when the decision to resign from active duty service was made. Finally, one item assessed the approximate annual income the first year out of active duty service.

Pre-resignation Versus Post-resignation Views Comparing Civilian and Naval Careers

In both the 1982 AWO Career Questionnaire and the 1987 Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire, respondents compared a civilian career with their naval career in 14 areas. The response scale ranged from 1 = *civilian substantially better* to 7 = *Navy substantially better*. These items evaluated: (1) interesting and challenging work, (2) work hours, (3) minimal work stress, (4) freedom from hassles, (5) pay and allowances, (6) health benefits/care, (7) job security, (8) family stability, (9) desirable place to live, (10) desirable co-workers, (11) responsibility, (12) chance for spouse to develop own interests, (13) quality leadership, and (14) freedom from crisis management

Analyses

The analyses were conducted in two phases. In the first phase, Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire data were analyzed to provide an understanding of the turnover process from the perspective of individuals who had resigned. However, to provide a picture of the relative evaluation of various aspects of their naval careers, one set of analyses collapsed responses (to evaluations of 14 aspects of their prior naval career) into two groups, for each item. Responses that were either *very negative* or *negative* were categorized as *unfavorable*. Responses that were either *very positive* or *positive* were categorized as *favorable*. In the second phase, the post-resignation responses of resigned officers were compared to their pre-resignation responses. In this way we were able to look at changes in attitudes and perceptions, if any, related to turnover. During this second phase, paired *t-tests* were used to determine whether significant changes in attitudes had occurred

RESULTS

Phase One: Post-resignation Impressions Regarding the Navy

Respondents reported that they generally were satisfied with their decision to resign from the Navy ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.82$) and that if they had to do it over again they probably would leave the Navy prior to retirement ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.83$).

The vast majority of our sample (82%) reported that they had made the decision to resign either during their first sea tour (44%) or during their first shore tour (38%). Interestingly, only a small segment of the sample (5.5%) reported that they had made the decision to resign prior to obtaining their warfare device (i.e., wings). This somewhat contradicts the belief that a large proportion of aviators enter into the Navy with the intent of staying only until the end of their obligated service. There were no significant differences between pilots and NFOs ($\chi^2 = 3.72$, $df = 4$, ns).

During their first year out of active duty service, only 33 percent of our sample reported annual incomes in excess of \$35,000. Furthermore, 24 percent reported annual incomes less than \$20,000, 22 percent reported annual incomes between \$20,000 and \$27,500, and 21 percent reported annual incomes between \$27,501 and \$35,000. During their first year out, pilots and NFOs made approximately the same annual incomes ($\chi^2 = 12.14$, $df = 7$, ns).

When asked to evaluate the amount and quality of flying in their prior naval careers, the sample responded very favorably. Sixty-one percent of the sample responded positively when evaluating the amount of flying time, while only 23 percent of the sample responded negatively. Furthermore, 64 percent of the sample responded positively when evaluating the quality of flying time, while only 18 percent of the sample responded negatively. Finally, when asked to assess whether they considered themselves primarily aviators or naval officers, no clear consensus emerged. Results indicated that 39 percent of the sample considered themselves primarily aviators, 37 percent of the sample considered themselves an equal balance of both, and 24 percent of the sample considered themselves primarily naval officers.

As indicated previously, respondents evaluated 14 aspects of their prior naval career. As shown in Table 3, the most positively evaluated career facet was "fellow naval officer"; the most negatively evaluated career facet was "crisis management." A within-subjects analysis of variance indicated significant differences in the mean responses across these items ($F(13,177) = 114.08$, $p < .001$).

To help understand the differences in evaluations across the 14 items, responses were recoded into "unfavorable" and "favorable" categories (see Figure 1). Of those responses categorized as either unfavorable or favorable (i.e., "neutral" responses were excluded from presentation of collapsed responses), five facets of a naval career were judged favorably overall--fellow naval officers, shore duty, assignments received, liberty ports, and commissary and exchange benefits. Five facets were judged unfavorably overall--paperwork, crisis management, detailers, work hours, and sea duty. Respondents were relatively evenly divided in their impressions of the remaining four career facets--change of assignments at 2-3 year intervals, geographic change, medical benefits/care, and leadership.

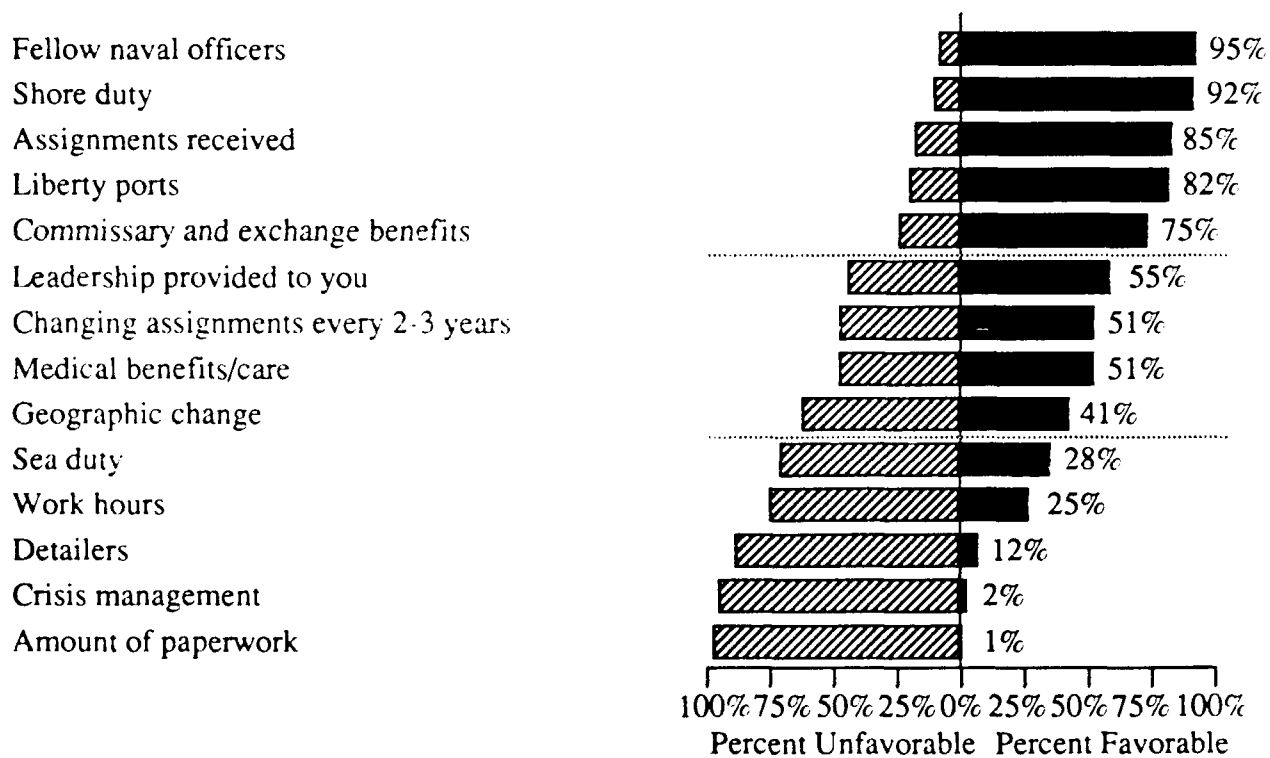
Additional analyses were conducted to determine if responses to the post-resignation survey varied as a function of how long individuals had been out of the Navy. To evaluate this, the variables from the Warfare Officer Resignation Questionnaire were correlated with an index reflecting the number of months individuals had been out of the Navy at the time they answered the survey. These results are presented in Table 4.

A significant positive correlation existed between how long the officers had been separated from active duty and satisfaction with the decision to resign. That is, the longer individuals had been away from active duty, the more satisfied they were with their decisions. This attitude is consistent with the significant negative correlations shown in the civilian versus Navy characteristics portion of Table 4. Significant negative correlations for all 14 characteristics would indicate that the officers' perceptions of the characteristics became more positive toward their civilian careers the longer the officers had been separated from the Navy. Only four of the comparisons (i.e., interesting and challenging work, desirable co-workers, responsibility, and quality leadership), demonstrated this relationship. Over the same period, the health benefits/care comparison shifted in a significantly more favorable direction for the Navy. The officers' evaluations of the remaining nine characteristics did not change as time passed after separation.

Table 3
Evaluation of Prior Naval Career

Facet	M	SD
Detailer	2.16	1.04
Assignments received	3.83	1.00
Change of assignments at 2-3 year intervals	3.00	1.11
Geographic change	2.79	1.15
Sea duty	2.41	1.15
Shore duty	3.76	0.83
Commissary and exchange benefits	3.39	0.86
Medical benefits/care	3.03	1.19
Amount of paperwork	1.94	0.82
Liberty ports	3.65	1.05
Crisis management	1.86	0.80
Fellow naval officers	4.22	0.83
Leadership provided to you	3.06	1.06
Work hours	2.62	0.90

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation.



Note. Because neutral responses to each item were eliminated from these analyses, the percent unfavorable and percent favorable sum to 100 percent for each item.

Figure 1. Relative ranking of naval career facets.

Table 4
Correlations with Number of Months Since Resignation

Variable	<i>r</i>	N
Career Facets		
Detailers	-.03	196
Assignments received	-.09	196
Change of assignments at 2-3 year intervals	-.13*	196
Geographic change	-.15*	195
Sea duty	-.05	194
Shore duty	-.03	195
Commissary and exchange benefits	-.10	196
Medical benefits/care	.07	196
Amount of paperwork	-.04	196
Liberty ports	.18*	195
Crisis management	-.13*	196
Fellow naval officers	-.08	195
Leadership provided to you	-.06	195
Work hours	.01	196
Civilian Versus Naval Characteristics		
Interesting and challenging work	-.15*	189
Work hours	.06	193
Minimal work stress	.01	193
Freedom from hassles	-.02	193
Pay and allowances	.06	193
Health benefits/care	.13*	191
Job security	-.07	193
Family stability	-.05	192
Desirable place to live	-.03	192
Desirable co-workers	-.16*	193
Responsibility	-.19**	192
Chance for spouse to develop own interests	-.15	187
Quality leadership	-.25**	192
Freedom from crisis management	-.03	193
Additional Items		
Satisfaction with the decision to resign	.12*	196
Would resign, if had to do it over again	.01	196

Note. *r* = person product moment correlation coefficient, N = number of respondents.

**p* < .05; one-tailed.

***p* < .005; one-tailed.

Respondents also tended to appreciate the stability found in civilian careers, the longer they had been out of the Navy. This is demonstrated by the significant negative correlations between time out of the Navy and individuals' attitudes toward both change of assignments at 2-3 year intervals and geographic change. In addition, the officers' attitudes towards crisis management in the Navy also declined as time passed since their separation.

On the other hand, there was a significant positive correlation between evaluation of liberty ports and time out of the Navy. This means that the longer individuals had been out, the more favorably they viewed their time in liberty ports.

Finally, it is interesting that a significant positive correlation (Table 4) exists between time out of the Navy and comparison of civilian versus Navy health benefits/care. This means that the individuals tended to rate the Navy's health benefits/care better in comparison with civilian health care benefits/care the longer they were separated from the Navy. A look at Table 5 shows that the average for resignees in 1987 was 3.65, indicating that after they had been out for 4 years they were approaching the perception that the two health benefit/care systems were comparable.

Phase Two: Pre-resignation Versus Post-resignation Impressions

As was previously mentioned, the sample in this present study was surveyed at two points in time--prior to their resignation (i.e., in 1982) and following their resignation (i.e., in 1987). In both questionnaires, individuals were asked to compare a naval career and a civilian career on 14 characteristics. The following set of analyses assessed whether changes in these comparisons occurred following resignation.

Table 5 presents the average evaluations of individuals in both 1982 and 1987. Statistically significant differences were found in half of the comparisons. However, only one characteristic (i.e., desirable place to live) had a *sizeable difference* across time. That is, when they were in the Navy, respondents evaluated a civilian career *much better to substantially better* when it came to having a desirable place to live. On the other hand, now that they have joined the civilian work force, civilian and naval careers are assessed much more comparably when it comes to having desirable places to live. There were six remaining items with significant differences in mean responses (i.e., work hours, freedom from hassles, job security, family stability, quality leadership, and crisis management). In two instances, job security and quality leadership, the mean scores were in the center of the scale and the direction of the change was to perceive naval and civilian careers as more comparable. The remaining four items initially pictured the civilian career in a much better light than the naval career. Two of these, work hours and family stability, moved slightly toward comparability between the careers. However, the remaining two, freedom from hassles and crisis management, moved even further toward the advantage of a civilian career.

Table 5
Comparison of Work and Career Characteristics:
Pre- and Post-resignation Responses

Characteristic	Pre-resignation		Post-resignation		<i>t</i>	N
	M	SD	M	SD		
Interesting and challenging work	4.43	1.47	4.36	1.54	-.49	185
Work hours	2.12	1.18	2.35	1.24	2.07*	191
Minimal work stress	3.12	1.14	3.03	1.22	-.81	192
Freedom from hassles	2.98	1.13	2.51	1.17	-4.34**	191
Pay and allowances	2.87	1.32	2.96	1.70	.59	191
Health benefits/care	3.50	1.59	3.65	1.71	-1.05	190
Job security	5.55	1.21	5.31	1.29	-2.01*	187
Family stability	1.64	.80	1.93	1.00	3.04**	163
Desirable place to live	1.65	.80	2.91	1.33	11.21**	162
Desirable co-workers	4.36	1.30	4.18	1.08	-1.63	190
Responsibility	4.76	1.45	4.64	1.45	-.89	188
Chance for spouse to develop own interests	2.48	1.21	2.45	1.17	-.29	148
Quality leadership	3.70	1.25	3.93	1.21	2.18*	187
Freedom from crisis management	3.19	1.80	2.81	1.09	-2.65**	188

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, *t* = student's *t* statistic, N = number of respondents.

**p* < .05.

***p* < .005.

DISCUSSION

It is clear that while AWOs who resigned from active duty service were satisfied with their decisions, they perceived many facets of their naval careers as positive experiences (see Figure 1). They thought very highly of: (1) the other officers they worked with, (2) shore duty, (3) their previous assignments, (4) liberty ports, and (5) Commissary and exchange benefits. On the other hand, their responses did highlight a number of detractors of a naval career. Specifically, they evaluated negatively: (1) the amount of paperwork their job entailed, (2) crisis management in the Navy, (3) detailers, (4) their work hours, and (5) their experience on sea duty.

It was welcome to find that such an overwhelming percentage of the sample responded very positively in their evaluation of the other officers they worked with. Such a finding could be used by more senior officers when counseling junior officers about whether to stay or leave the Navy. It is probable that this sense of esprit de corps is not as strong in many civilian careers (including civilian airlines) and emphasis on it could be used as a retention tool.

Two of the negatively viewed career facets (crisis management and paperwork) (Table 3) are things that prevent many aviators from doing what they see as their primary occupation--flying an airplane. Thus, they may view unfavorably anything they perceive as interfering with flying. This

point is emphasized by their very positive evaluation of the amount and quality of flying while in the Navy. Perhaps aviators' expectations are unrealistic as they emerge from flight training since the largest proportion (39%) considered themselves primarily aviators and the smallest proportion (24%) considered themselves primarily naval officers. Previous research has demonstrated the important role that setting realistic expectations early in a career has upon subsequent retention (Wanous 1980). While their occupations as pilots and NFOs receive a great deal of emphasis, more emphasis could be placed on their leadership roles (i.e., division officers) in squadrons. When this is done, their leadership and administrative duties may not be perceived in such a negative light and may be learned more quickly (Morrison & Brantner, 1991).

It is important to note that while respondents saw their previous assignments as being a very positive aspect of their naval careers, they were considerably less positive about their detailers (see Table 3). This indicates that there may be a problem in the interpersonal interaction with detailers during the assignment process. Such a finding supports previous research that also found detailers' interpersonal interactions with constituents lacking in certain areas (Wilcove, Bruni, & Morrison, 1987).

This finding also highlights a potential problem in the Officer Separation Questionnaire that is administered to resigning officers. As presented earlier, the third most frequent reason given by pilots for resigning was "problems with assignment/detailing." If the individuals in this present study accurately reflect the AWO community at-large, then it would seem appropriate to make a change in the Separation Questionnaire to separate assignment and detailing. In this way, we could distinguish between "assignment" as an outcome and "detailing" as a process in identifying reasons for leaving.

The longer individuals had been out of the Navy, the more satisfied they were with their decision to resign. This is one indication that the majority have effectively adjusted to their new civilian careers. Support (Table 4) for this interpretation is provided by their decreasing satisfaction with the Navy's job instability (frequent relocation and job change) and crisis management. Additional support (Table 4) is shown by their increasing satisfaction with civilian leadership, job responsibility, challenging work, and desirable co-workers.

If the officer's comparisons of naval and civilian careers on most of the 14 characteristics had become more positive toward the civilian career the longer the officers were separated from active duty, it might be assumed that they were rationalizing their decision to resign. This did not occur. The majority of the comparisons (Table 4) were not correlated with the length of time the officers had been separated from active duty and the remainder shifted in different directions, lending little credence to the "rationalizing" explanation. It may be appropriate to assume that they went through a gradual learning process in which the perception of the five characteristics they had developed while in the Navy were being adjusted to be consistent with their experiences since separation. Alternatively, their assessments may have been regressing toward the mean (Table 5 shows five of seven significant changes doing this).

Surprisingly, there were not large differences between respondents' evaluations of work characteristics (civilian versus Navy) when comparing their pre-resignation and post-resignation data. In only one area (i.e., desirable place to live) was there a major shift (Table 5). This lack of large differences seems to contradict the previous research of Hinrichs (1975). Perhaps the high

degree of confidentiality ensured to individuals when they participated in the 1982 AWO Career Questionnaire led to responses that closely reflected their true feelings.

Finally, this study demonstrated the utility of a post-resignation survey for increasing understanding of the turnover of naval aviators. When it came to evaluating negative career facets and characteristics, the findings of this study were not very different from those obtained from the Officer Separation Questionnaire. However, this study also provided an indication of some very positive career facets and characteristics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Because individuals in our sample evaluated their previous assignments differently than they evaluated their previous detailers, OP-136 should consider modifying the current Officer Separation Questionnaire to reflect this. That is, ask officers to evaluate separately their past assignments and their previous experiences with detailers.

2. Realistic expectations regarding nonflying duties and responsibilities should be instilled in aviators while they are still in flight training. Further, the importance of these duties and responsibilities should continually be emphasized during their initial sea and shore tours.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS USED IN PRESENT STUDY

Post-resignation impressions regarding the Navy: Survey items

What is your evaluation of the following aspects of your Navy career.

	very negative		neutral		very positive
a. Detailers	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
b. Assignments received	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
c. Change of assignments at 2-3 year intervals	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
d. Changes of geographic location with assignment changes	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
e. Sea duty	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
f. Shore duty	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
g. Commissary & exchange benefits	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
h. Medical benefits/care	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
i. Amount of paperwork	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
j. Liberty ports	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
k. Crisis management	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
l. Fellow Navy officers	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
m. Leadership provided to you	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
n. Work hours	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with your decision to leave the Navy?

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

If you had to do it over again, would you leave the Navy prior to retirement?

Definitely Would Not	Probably Would Not	Uncertain	Probably Would	Definitely Would
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

What is your evaluation of the following aspects of your previous Navy career?

	very negative		neutral		very positive
a. Amount of flying time	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
b. Quality of flying time	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

What was your approximate income your first year out of active duty service?

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$27,500
- ☐ \$27,501 - \$35,000
- ☐ \$35,001 - \$42,500
- ☐ \$42,501 - \$50,000
- ☐ \$50,001 - \$57,500
- ☐ \$57,501 - \$65,000
- ☐ More than \$65,000

While in the Navy, which statement most applied to you?

- ☐ I considered myself an aviator, first and foremost.
- ☐ I was primarily an aviator and secondarily a Navy officer.
- ☐ I was an equal balance of both.
- ☐ I was primarily a Navy officer and secondarily an aviator.
- ☐ I considered myself a Navy officer, first and foremost.

Pre-resignation versus post-resignation views comparing civilian and Navy careers.

Please indicate the relative opportunity of obtaining each of the following characteristics in the Navy versus obtaining them in your civilian career.

	Civilian				Navy		
	Substantially Better	Much Better	Better	Comparable	Better	Much Better	Substantially Better
a. Interesting and challenging work	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
b. Work hours	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
c. Minimal work stress	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
d. Freedom from hassles	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
e. Pay and allowances	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
f. Health benefits/care	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
g. Job security	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
h. Family stability	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
i. Desirable place to live	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
j. Desirable co-workers	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
k. Responsibility	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
l. Chance for spouse to develop own interests	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
m. Quality leadership	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
n. Freedom from crisis management	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]

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